

**California Partnership for the San Joaquin Valley
Kings County Public Forum
Hanford, CA – April 6, 2006**

Government Panel

Tony Oliviera – Chairman Board of Supervisors Kings County

- The San Joaquin Valley (Valley) is the last economic frontier for California:
 - It can be the driving force for the new economy.
 - Large workforce that continues to grow.
 - It has an abundant amount of resources.
- Economic expansion will grow with education and quality of family life:
 - Expand community colleges and provide adult education and vocational education.
- The joint educational effort between the cities of Kings County, the County Economic Development and State agencies was a big success.

John Stankowich – County Superintendent of Schools

- Problems with a brain drain in the Valley:
 - Students leave for college and higher education and don't return.
 - Community colleges are trying to slow this problem.
- Academic standards are good because it motivates students:
 - There are plans that motivate students in different ways – such as showing students how their education is applied to real jobs with real professionals.
- Develop technical education and vocational education programs.

Ron Hoggard – City Manager, Corcoran

- Infrastructure matters in keeping and bringing businesses to the Valley.
- The workforce requires skill sets and they should be taught at adult education centers and community colleges.
- Over regulation burdens business and communities.

Dan Chin – Mayor – City of Hubbard

- Education is a key element to bringing economic development to the Valley.
- Hubbard is creating one campus with a high school and community college.
- Kings County unfortunately ranks in the lowest tier in the United States.

Follow up questions/comments:

What institutions and organizational structures need to be implemented to obtain vision?

Community Colleges – look to other states where they take rural community colleges (30 miles from a 4 year university) and grant limited 4 year degrees.

Water storage needs to match the housing expansion.

Have a group that pulls all the different pieces together and form a unified plan.

Education and business need to communicate and collaborate better. This will help promote an educated workforce.

Business Panel

John Lehn – JTO/EDC President

- Strategies should focus on infrastructure and job development.
- Tax dollars do not forge the way to prosperity and wealth: jobs and education do.
- SB 972 limits the growth of the San Joaquin Valley and the San Joaquin Valley should be exempt from this statute.
- Completion of Highway 198 would improve shipping times and reduce congestion and air pollution.
- Relief from prevailing wage.
- Pursue a waiver from workforce investment act.

Don Mills – Kings County Water District

- The Valley should be treated equally with the other areas of California (four counties applied for a water funding project – all scored high on the application, however, they were denied the funds because a priority factor was added and to the ranking system. Consequently, the funds were given to Northern Californian counties.)
- These counties need additional water storage for the population growth in the Valley.
- The Valley counties often get the run around and are dismissed as low priorities.

Ryan Berato – Farm Bureau

- Thanked the Partnership for taking the time to recognize the San Joaquin Valley.
- Urban sprawl is moving through the Valley and it is compromising agricultural lands:
 - A plan needs to be developed, so there can be smart growth and planned growth.
 - Farms lands need to be preserved.

Linda Lahodny – Lemoore Chamber of Commerce

- Success in achieving the goals requires a San Joaquin regional plan:
 - An attempt to gain a plan so far has not been successful.
 - The counties need to come together and put aside differences.
- The Valley should be designated as a Region Wide Investment Zone – this will help to influence industry to locate in the Valley.
- Creating the Zone might prevent industries from leaving.
- Leadership should start with someone on the Partnership.

Dick Jacques – Hanford Chamber of Commerce/Board of Realtors

- Maintain the integrity of the local cities.
- Frustrated because Kings County and Kings River is never considered – don't forget about them.

- Top three priorities for the Valley:
 - Transportation:
 - Need to fund Highway 198.
 - Environmental regulations are hindering proper development of highways.
 - Should build a high speed rail system.
 - Water:
 - Kings County is requiring developers to prove they can replace the water they need for the amount of homes they need.
 - Education:
 - Focus on improving the education system.
- Establish a permanent regional coalition to continue to solve the Valley.

Community Panel

Judy Horn – Hand in Hand

- The Partnership should work more with community activists.
- Works from the bottom up in a diverse community help all in need.

Frank Gornick – West Hills College

- There needs to be equitable funding for community colleges in the Valley:
 - Vocational education funding is expensive because of the costs involved for equipment and small class size.
 - The Valley sees a disparity in funding compared to the rest of California.
 - Population will grow and to maintain a well educated workforce there needs to be adequate funding.
 - Support SB 361 – funding for community colleges.
- Equitable funding will help improve the quality of life in the Valley.

Kendall Fults – Vice President, Ambulatory Services

- Nursing ratios are hurting the hospitals in the Kings County area:
 - There is no flexibility managing the ratio.
- Hospitals in low risk earthquake zones cannot afford to retrofit their facilities.
- Urban and Rural zone classifications are affecting funding for transportation:
 - They are receiving less dollars and it is difficult for people who need help to access to the facilities.
- Difficult to get reimbursements from the State and Federal Government for health care service.

Dale Norton – College of the Sequoias

- “The most powerful catalyst for change is when people learn what they all ready know.”
- What do we know:
 - Community Colleges provide the greatest opportunity for people to gain higher education.
 - Many of the skills that people learn in community colleges will help them get a job.
 - The skilled workforce in the Valley is insufficient.

- What have we learned:
 - Partnerships are a key to moving forward – it can't be done individually.
 - Access to service requires the ability to get to the service because some people can't afford to commute.
 - Rise in tuition rates diminish the ability for low income individuals to obtain an education.

David Droker - Kings Community Action Community

- What can the community do to keep resources in the area and capture other resources that are available?
 - CalWORKs is a great program and the Partnership should explore similar programs.
 - Public-Private Cooperation in the housing committee.
 - Reduce the barriers that prevent income development.
- Support and provide more resources for vocational education.
- Find regional issues for the Valley and promote through a partnership.
- Make the Valley a desirable place to live:
 - People move to places with entertainment, parks and life.
- Leadership should be based on local sub-committees.

Larry Spikes - Kings County Administrative Officer

- Reiterated the need for education and roads.
- The Valley needs to find the voice that is loud enough to get a response:
 - One major hurdle the Valley has is the fear of losing an identity.
 - One point of focus can be transportation and roads.